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Introduction

Arden Kitt associates has been appointed to prepare designs and submit an outline planning application of a proposal for 4 new build homes at Hylton Terrace, Bedlinog.

The applicant is exploring the development potential of the site, which is located within the settlement of Bedlinog - a growth area as identified in the adopted Local Development Plan. Early enquiries with MTCBC Housing Strategy team identified a greater need for 2-bedroom properties in the local area, and designs have been developed on this basis. Difficult site constraints and the existing context have been balanced with a need to deliver sustainable homes fit for contemporary lifestyles; resulting in a proposal which reinterprets the valleys terrace for modern living.

The land is wholly situated within identified settlement boundaries and represents an infill opportunity, given its location between the existing terraced housing at Hylton Terrace and the local Primary School. The neighbourhood is characteristically residential in nature, with a variety of 2 storey terraced type housing that has been individualised and altered over time. A local material palette of pennant grey stone, brickwork, and various renders represents a mix of architectural treatments that provide an opportunity to use these local references to introduce newer, forward looking styled homes; suited to current and future needs.

It is the applicant's intention to develop housing for rent, to deliver new homes that are energy efficient, comfortable, and sustainable. Site topography and the immediate context have heavily influenced the design approach, resulting in a 3-storey arrangement with elevated gardens to the rear and street level entrances. The resulting designs accommodate off street parking, private rear gardens, and modern open plan living arrangements to provide safe and attractive homes for future residents.

This Design Statement & Site Analysis is written in support of the proposed development; including an overview of the design process commensurate with the scope and size of the submitted scheme.

Project Vision

To provide sustainable new homes that complement the existing mix of residential property in the locality. Houses will cater for contemporary living; being energy efficient, and affordable to run, with renewable technologies for comfort and convenience.



Constraints & Opportunities

Culture & Community

Site Location

The site is located in Bedlinog, in the Borough of Merthyr Tydfil and approx. 4.5 miles southeast of the Principal Town.

Bedlinog is principally residential in nature, with local facilities including a primary school, doctors, convenience store, rugby club, community centre, and church/ church hall. Local topography ensures the place retains a semi-rural character despite its relative closeness to larger population centres such as Merthyr Tydfil and Ystrad Mynach. Steeply sloping valley sides and linear streets which follow land contours are strong characteristics of the area.

The application site is situated within identified settlement boundaries and is a vacant parcel of land between 36 Hylton Terrace and the local primary school. Site levels are particularly challenging and slope steeply up from street level toward a service lane for the school to the rear. The area was previously cleared for development (circa 2010) and is presently overgrown having been left un-managed in the interim.

Planning Context

Bedlinog is identified as a growth area in the adopted LDP, being an established settlement of modest size and with identified capacity for additional homes.

The site is in a long-established residential area, and within established settlement boundaries. Local policies, including those specific to Bedlinog, are relevant to the proposal, together with Planning Policy Wales advice relating to sustainable development. The previous planning history for the application site includes outline consent for residential uses – ref. P/01/0391, and full consent for two separate dwellings – ref. P/05/0393 & P/05/0394.

Principles outlined in the Welsh Government Site and Context Analysis Guide have been followed, together with advice contained in TAN:12 in terms of sustaining local character. This design statement therefore summarises the analysis and design response specific to the site and project brief.



FIGURE 1 - SITE LOCATION IN CONTEXT OF BEDLINOG

Constraints & Opportunities

Surrounding Land & Buildings

The site is located centrally along the Hylton Terrace/ Commercial Street axis which runs through Bedlinog; and is within 10mins walk of available local facilities. Both the adjacent terrace and school are set up off the street, each effectively sitting on a stone podium that adds an extra storey height to the buildings. Land slopes steeply up away from the street and providing a significant constraint to any potential development. The opposite side of the street is enclosed with a linear hedgerow, beyond which the land slopes steeply down toward a heavily wooded riparian corridor of the Taff Bargoed River (a tributary of the River Taff).

Properties in the immediate area are mainly 2 storey dwellings, with a reasonably consistent typology across a variety of styles that have been subject to a range of alterations and personalisation in the course of time. A predominantly traditional character exhibits some typical late Victorian and Edwardian styling, is not demonstrative of a particular overarching design approach or of any evident architectural merit with which it would be necessary to conform.

Local characteristics include strong linear forms running parallel to the street, properties with active frontage, and a vertical emphasis to fenestration patterns. Grey/ Brown pennant stone typifies earlier buildings (and the school) in the vicinity, with varying renders and brick finishes on more recent properties. A majority of buildings lack architectural adornment and fuss detailing, which is limited to stylised surrounds to windows and doors in some cases. Set-back types vary depending on the age of property, including directly off pavement, forecourt gardens, and driveway parking.

The north side of Hylton Terrace is effectively a 3-storey feature in the townscape, comprising a street level podium with step access to typical 2 storey terraced housing above. The depth of the terrace is such that there is no meaningful garden amenity to properties, with large rear retaining walls and steeply sloping gardens characterising the area. Several properties retain ground floor bay windows, and most have large front windows overlooking the street. Houses address the street directly, with little to no set back.

The school set-back is more pronounced, creating a forecourt plateau presently in use as the playground. A large stone retaining wall topped with a fence forms the street interface.

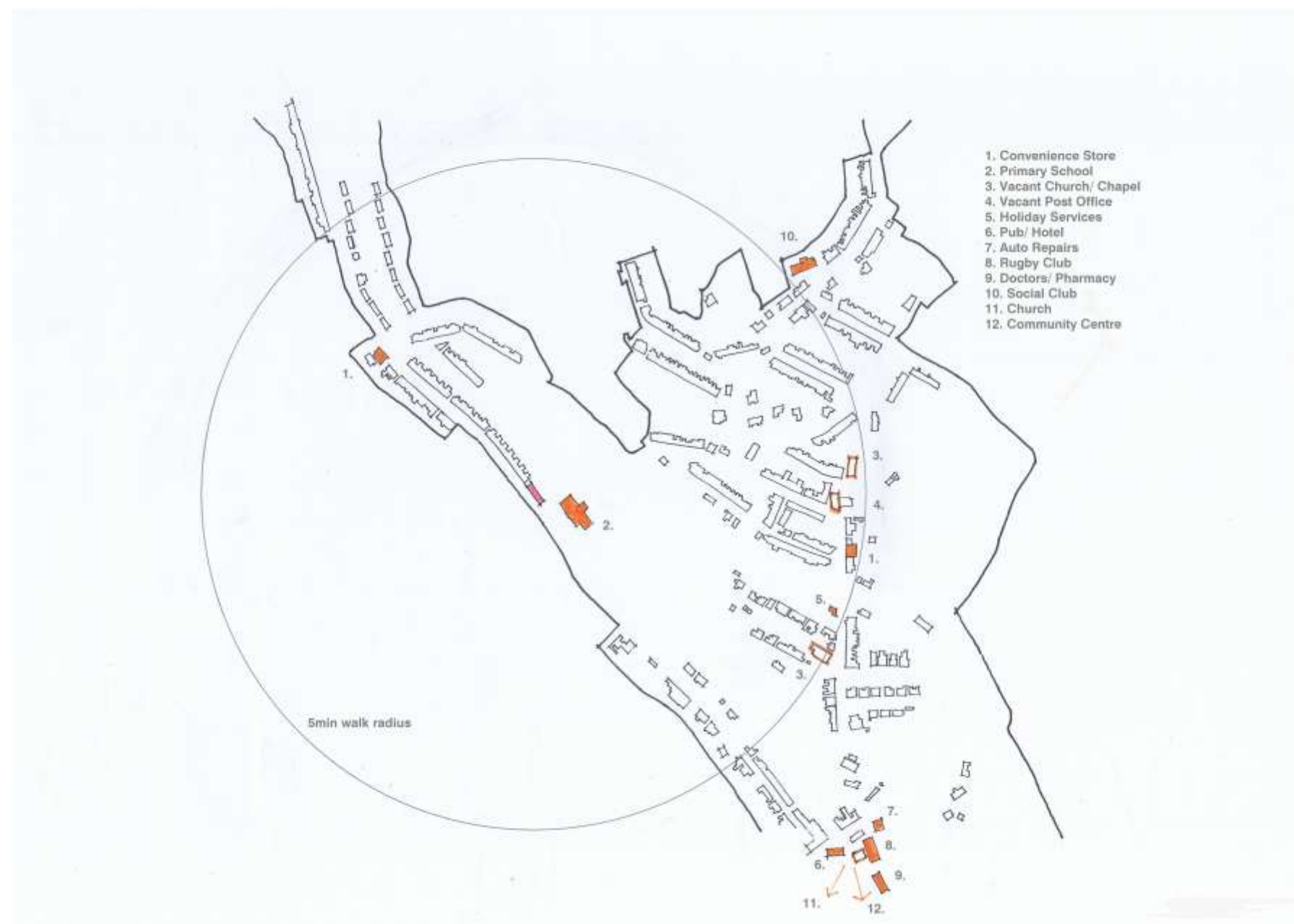


FIGURE 2 - SURROUNDING BUILDINGS & LOCAL FACILITIES

Constraints & Opportunities

Neighbourhood Structure

The immediate area comprises a mixture of housing. It is beyond the scope of the brief to determine the exact tenure mix, although site observations suggest that the neighbourhood comprises a reasonably diverse range of housing needs. The addition of another residence in the area is wholly commensurate with the character and nature of the locality more generally.

Neighbouring developments include a range of styles and tenures reflective of Bedlinog's growth from C19th onward.

Consultations

The application site is wholly owned by a third party who is aware of the submitted proposal. No wider consultation has been undertaken, and as is commensurate with a proposal of this size, feedback would be expected as part of the statutory consultation period during the planning application process.

Market Analysis

The applicant has reviewed the local market and housing need; and determined that four 2-bedroom properties would be appropriate at this location. Presently the development is envisaged as a build to rent model.



Constraints & Opportunities

Landscape

Topography

The general landform is steeply sloping river valley, to the east of the Taff Bargoed. Hylton Terrace generally follows the topography, with properties perpendicular to the street and arranged as terraced forms. The street elevation and lack of buildings opposite provides good solar conditions throughout the year.

Green & Blue infrastructure

Local areas for leisure & play and large areas of open space are within easy walking distance of the site. A heavily wooded riparian corridor at the base of the valley is relatively inaccessible, with land above the site to the north-east providing links to upper parts of Bedlinog and excellent access to the open countryside.

Ecology

The site is overgrown in its present state. Preliminary ecology scoping studies have been conducted and the proposal anticipates an element of retention, mitigation, and improvement of a large part of the existing site. Landscape proposals are presently in abeyance, and it is expected that the application will liaise with the LPA in discharging any associated conditions for ecological enhancement and landscaping.

Ground Conditions

Ground conditions are expected to be favourable for development given the wider use of the locality for housing. Detailed investigation will be undertaken in preparation for any retaining walls, civils works, and new foundations in line with relevant legislation.



FIGURE 3 - GREEN/ BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE LOCALLY

Constraints & Opportunities

Movement & Infrastructure

Road Hierarchy & Access

The site has direct access to the main trunk road network at the A472, and pedestrian access along Commercial Street to bus services at Cwmfelin Square. Anticipated future rail services through Bedlinog (LDP Policy SW12) as part of the South Wales Metro augurs favourably for development in this location, with access expected via Ystrad Mynach and connecting bus & rail services to national rail services via Central Cardiff.

Vehicular access to the primary road network is achievable via the B4255 through to the A472 corridor for access to the A470 and wider regional network.

Utilities & infrastructure

It is expected that the development will benefit from easy access to existing utilities infrastructure already servicing the neighbourhood. The applicant will make necessary enquiries with statutory undertakers, and it is expected that connections for water, gas, electricity, sewerage, and telecoms can be made at reasonable cost.

Connectivity

The site benefits from reasonable pedestrian access to the immediate local street network, which is presently served by bus routes to and from Merthyr Tydfil via Treharris. There is limited connectivity to neighbouring streets, particularly in an east-west direction due to the topography. Pedestrian links to the local amenities are reasonably direct and despite the lack of street permeability more widely.

The site is approximately 10mins walk from Cwmfelin Square for an hourly bus service to Merthyr Tydfil during working hours.

Local access roads are linked via Commercial Street to the nearest principal route (B4255), which is very well connected to the A472 & A470 main arterial routes.

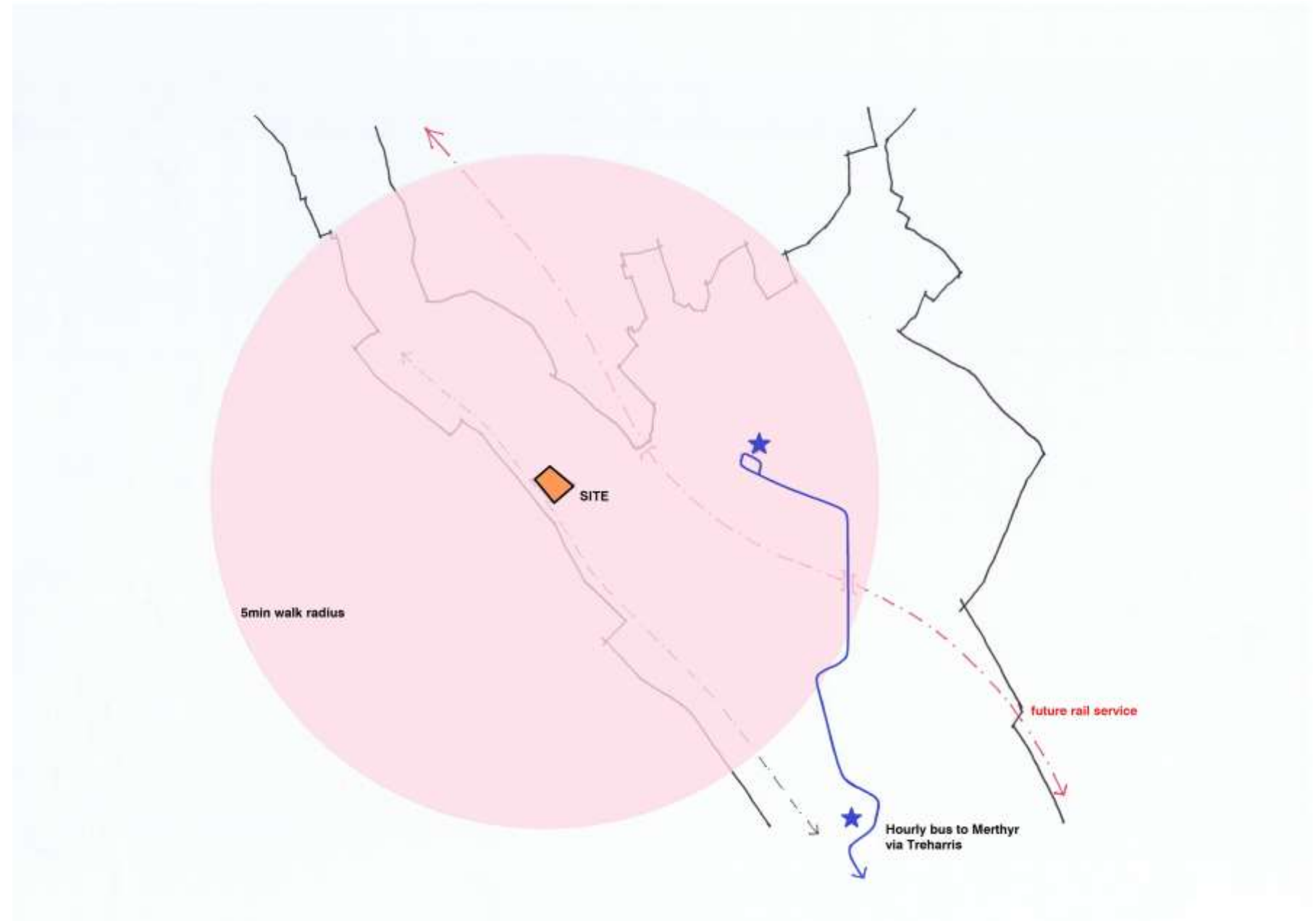


FIGURE 4 - PRINCIPAL ROADS, RAIL, AND PEDESTRIAN ROUTES

Constraints & Opportunities

Built Form

Urban Form

Urban form is typical of the late Victorian & Edwardian approach to rapid urban expansion, with the site located within a clearly identifiable residential street which extends outward from the settlement core at Cwmfelin Square. Whilst properties tend to address streets in a traditional manner, the urban block layout is limited by the topography and lacks permeability and optimal integration with any wider urban fabric. The nature of the proposal is that broader urban design matters will remain unaffected in any event.

History & Archaeology

Hylton Terrace remained undeveloped until the early 1900's, with Bedlinog mainly centred about the train station and colliery near High Street. The school and terrace of houses appear to have been constructed prior to 1914 and separated by a small parcel of land which remains and is the application site.

Above the site at higher elevation is an overgrown area which records indicate to be made up ground resulting from the original railway engineering works. This is well outside the site curtilage.

Online searches indicate that the site appears to have been cleared for development around 2010, and its present condition is the result of regrowth and self-seeding plants in the interim.

Scale, Height & Density

The immediate neighbourhood is typically residential in scale, predominantly 2-3 storey housing, comprising long rows of terraced properties which follow land contours.

Bedlinog Primary School is a dominant feature at the southern end of Hylton Terrace, albeit set back and above street level. Its typology is consistent with other hillside county schools of a similar age – utilising cut and fill approach to make the best of use of the space available on a constrained site.

Net development density is typical of the low rise urban terraced forms which make up the neighbourhood.

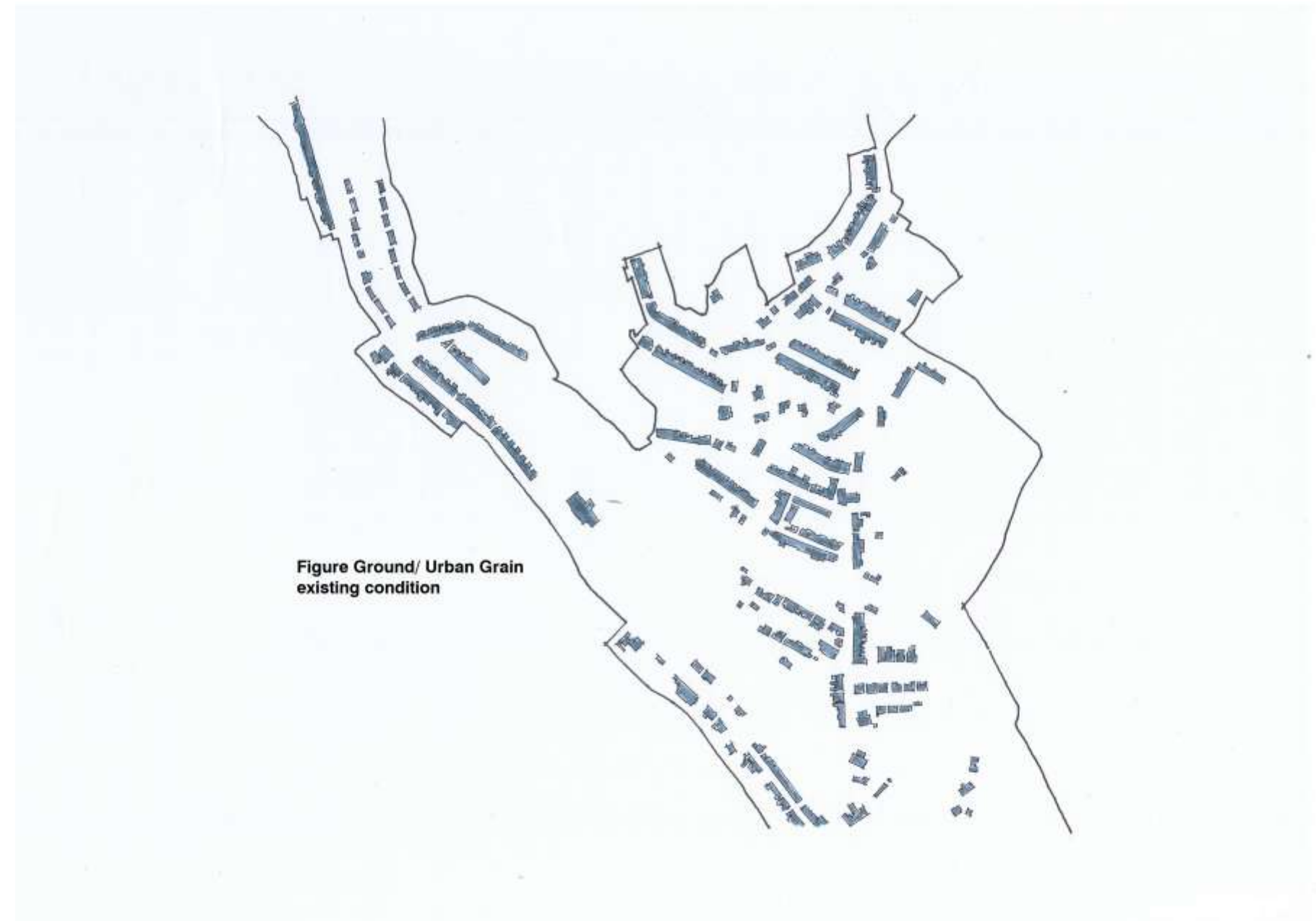


FIGURE 6 – URBAN GRAIN/ BUILT DENSITY

Constraints & Opportunities

Character & Building traditions

Homes in the immediate area are typically terraced houses with simple pitched roofs, as outlined above.

The oldest properties are characterised by the use of cut pennant stone, some with brick quoin features – and directly fronting the street. Later properties have substituted pennant stone for rendered finishes, and there is widespread use of larger ground floor front windows (and bay windows to some late Edwardian homes). There are a few more recent additions and alterations, generally of a poor appearance and with little regard to the original character of the area. Cement renders and spar-dash are a common “improvement” to many properties which obscures the original characteristics.

The terrace along which the application site sits is comprised of three long rows of repeating houses, raised about a storey height above street level with stepped access to front doors. Large ground floor windows (some with bays) are a common feature. All homes are finished in a plain painted cement render, with clay brick detailing and copings to the plinth/street level retaining walls only. Roof forms are plain and windows simple in arrangement. Properties are set back by virtue of the plinth and stepped access arrangements.

The tight spacing of buildings reflects topographical constraints and the mix of dwelling types in the neighbourhood; and is characteristic of prevailing conditions at the time of construction. Properties are typically between 5.0m – 5.5m width, with rear alterations & extensions offering a much greater variety of property sizes than the street elevations might first suggest. More recent homes in the neighbourhood tend to be more generously sized and of a contrasting style to the typical terraced houses.

In summary the area is characterised by a varied material palette and a more restrained building typology, within which there exists a subtle variation depending upon the age and location of the property within the neighbourhood.

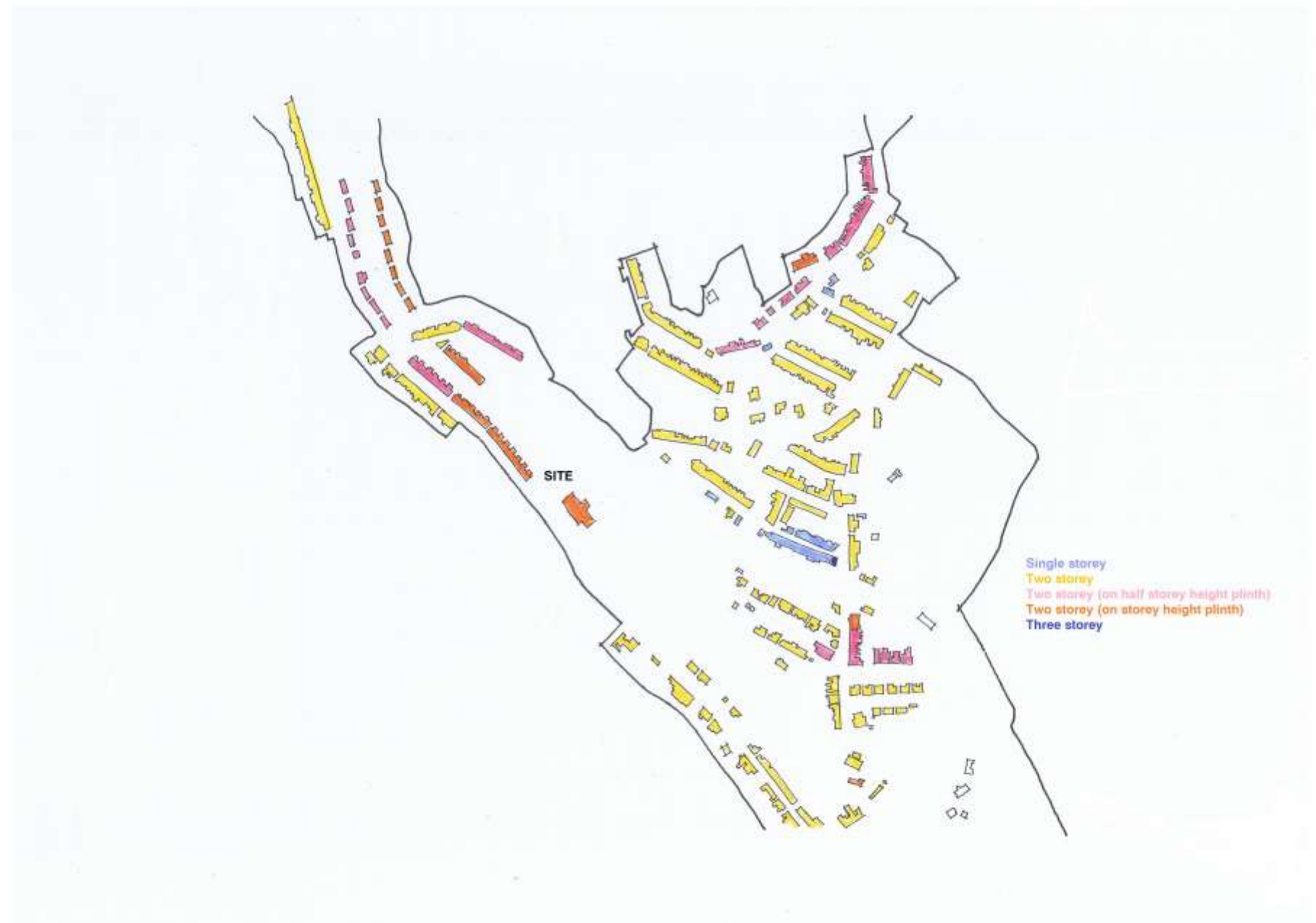


FIGURE 7 - SITE CHARACTERISTICS (BUILDING HEIGHTS)

Constraints & Opportunities

Neighbourhood Characteristics



FIGURE 8 – PROPERTIES ADJACENT TO SITE



FIGURE 9 – PROPERTIES JUST NORTH OF SITE

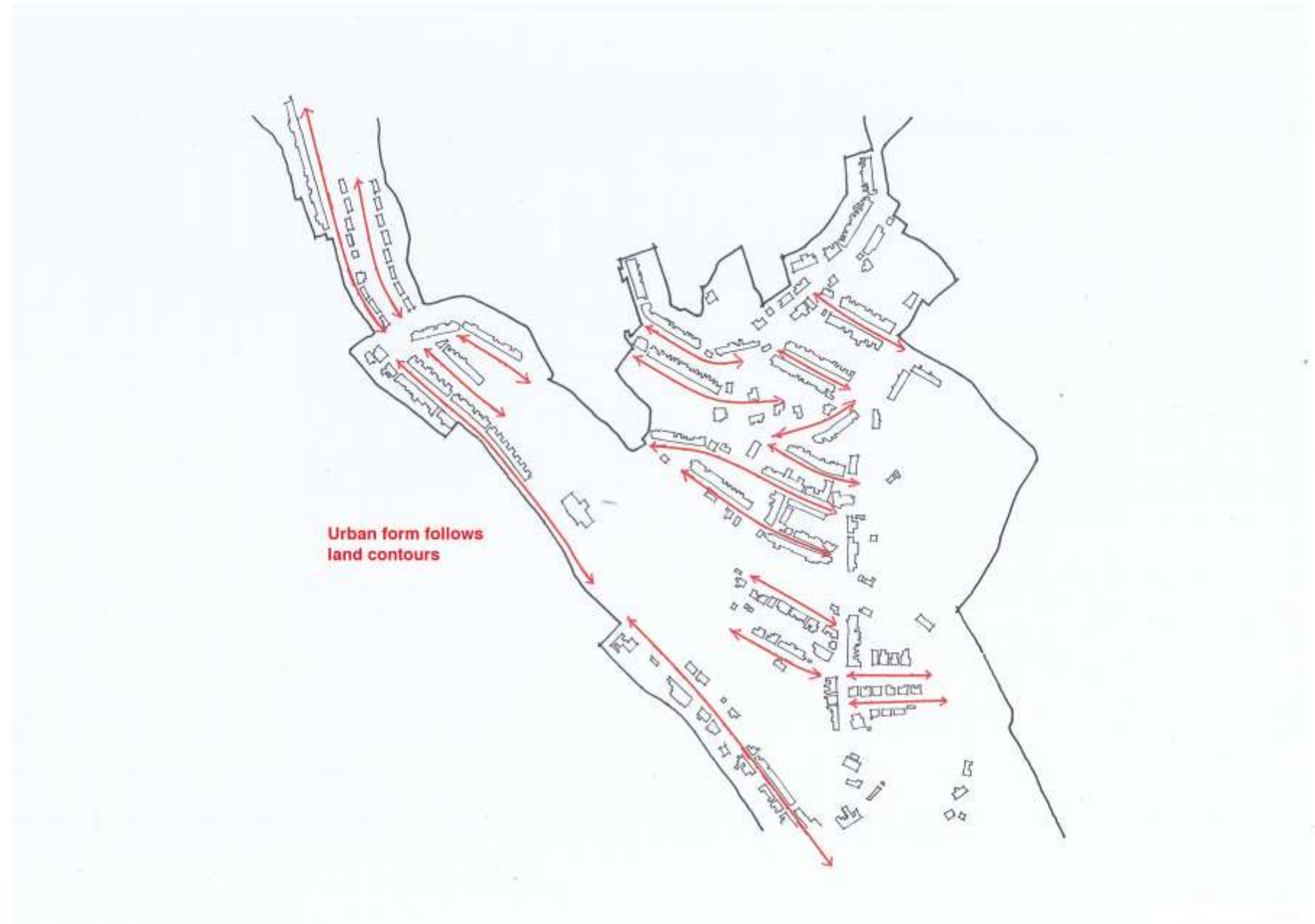


FIGURE 10 - SITE CHARACTERISTICS (LINEAR TERRACES ALONG CONTOUR LINES)

Planning Policy

National Policy - Wales

Infill Development

The proposal supports PPW 4.2.23 as an “infill and windfall site” together with a majority of the national sustainable placemaking outcomes (PPW p.42) relevant to a small development of this nature.

The development therefore:

- Prioritises the use of previously developed land
- Supports a diverse population
- Unlocks potential and regenerates
- [supports existing] community-based facilities
- Accessible by existing public transport
(and also anticipates future rail provision)

Design – TAN 12

The proposal is a direct response to existing local characteristics using a contemporary design approach - making use of form, patterns of fenestration, materials and aesthetic treatments which contribute positively to the neighbourhood. A low-profile roof will assist with the inclusion of Solar PV technology and the management of rainwater as part of the SUDs scheme for the development. The raised plinth has been revisited as undercroft parking which maintains the street characteristics whilst accommodating private vehicles. Brick colours will match local pennant stone, with contrasting bands for contrast and visual interest.

Visual representations of the designs are included to show the houses in the context of the existing street scene and demonstrate the positive impact to be had from a small development of this nature.

TAN 12 principles are met as follows:

- Creates places with needs of people in mind
- Respects local character
- Focusses on the quality of places & living environments
- Provides energy efficiency housing
- Exhibits an efficient use of land
- Balanced approach to TAN 12 principles

Placemaking principles have been followed in providing a contextual response which builds on local character *and* provides homes better suited for contemporary lifestyles. The building’s adaptability will ensure continued use of the building in line with sustainability principles and helps contribute to meeting the continuing challenge of the climate and nature emergency.

The decision in this case to reinterpret the architectural language of neighbouring properties in a contemporary manner, is fully concordant with Planning Policy Wales 3.16 and the need for new development to consider the objectives of good design and placemaking.

Planning Policy

Local Policy – Merthyr Tydfil

Infill Development – Small windfall site

Proposals meet the following key objectives of the LDP strategy (being relevant to small infill sites).

- Encourages a sustainable level and distribution of population growth.
- Ensures the sufficient provision of land for the delivery of a range and choice of housing [for local need]
- Promoting the continued regeneration of existing communities.
- Promotion of high quality, sustainable design.
- Supports existing community facilities.
- Protect and enhance character and appearance of the landscape and countryside.
- Promotes renewable and low carbon energy.

The proposal:

- Is compatible with neighbouring uses.
- Respects local build density, aspect, scales, and form
- Respects neighbouring privacy
- Provides secure private garden amenity commensurate with similar properties in the area.
- Helps promote a resource efficient settlement pattern.
- Helps support local facilities.

The proposal helps:

- Protect the environment as a whole whilst balancing the need for development.
- To provide good design, that meets a diversity of needs which uses resources efficiently.
- To enhance the vibrancy and diversity of existing communities
- Support a modern, integrated, and sustainable public transport system.

Proposals meet the following relevant policies:

SW3 – Sustainably Distributing New Homes

- Located within an LDP identified growth area

SW4 – Settlement Boundaries

- Site is wholly within settlement boundaries.

SW11 – Sustainable Design & Placemaking

- Positively responds to local character and context.
- Enhances the general street scene to create a good quality townscape.
- Does not result in unacceptable impact on local amenity, loss of light, privacy, or visual impact.
- Will not adversely affect County Borough network of green infrastructure.
- Provides accessible homes with adequate parking.
- Provides flexible accommodation and adds to the mix of available property in the Bedlinog Ward
- Flexible homes using sustainable designs & construction techniques.
- Minimises the demand for energy & includes renewable technologies.
- Will not cause unacceptable environmental impacts.
- Will incorporate SUDs where practicable.
- Includes adequate space for waste & recycling.
- Promotes creation of healthy environments and helps reduce opportunities for crime and ASB.

SW12 – Improvements to Transport Network

- The proposal anticipates future SEW Metro expansion and services to Bedlinog via the Cwm Bargoed rail line.

SW13 – Community Facilities

- The proposal will provide attractive, contemporary homes in support of existing local facilities.

EnW1 - Nature Conservation

- Impacts of development can be satisfactorily mitigated [due to upper parts of site being retained for ecological benefit]
- Retained areas of site can be improved as advised by consulting ecologists.

EnW4 - Environmental Protection

Proposals will not generate unacceptable impacts in terms of:

- Pollution.
- Land Contamination.
- Hazardous Substances.
- Land Stability.
- Noise, Vibration, Dust, Odours, Light Pollution.

Placemaking

Policy Guidance – Placemaking Charter

Infill Development

Placemaking principles are promoted as follows:

- Proposals will help enhance the existing sense of community and promote equality.
- Development which uses land efficiently, supports and enhances existing places and is well connected.
- [will in future, be] in a location that provides a choice of transport modes to help avoid dependence on private vehicles.
- increases the local tenure mix at an appropriate development density, in a sustainable location, and which positively responds to the public realm.
- property interfaces are designed to help define the existing street, and such that they promote social interaction and safety with a well-defined transition between public and private spaces.
- distinctive property styles in the area are reinterpreted in designs that quietly reflect the existing pattern of development whilst providing a residence better suited to contemporary modes of living.

Design Development

The design approach accepts the suitability of the site for residential use, being in conformity with relevant planning policies.

Initial concepts considered several options for overcoming site topography and minimising the extent of any retaining walls, whilst also balancing accepted placemaking principles. The effective 3 storey height of the adjacent terrace also provided an opportunity to develop a contextual response that also accommodates off street parking, good levels of natural surveillance, and provision for private rear gardens. A reinterpreted terrace of four properties is proposed therefore, reflecting the characteristics of the adjacent houses in a contemporary manner to better accommodate immediate and future lifestyles.

All design options sought to respect the established building line/ interface set-back, with early iterations including semi-detached house types and separate adjacent driveways. A small footprint, 3 storey option was deemed preferable in addressing the site topography (front to back) yet risked being unfeasible due to the elevation of the adjacent terrace and school on each side of the site. Consequently, the preferred design includes sufficient space to undertake regrading works, and an opportunity to reimagine the terrace typology. The resulting proposal uses the plinth characteristic of the adjacent terrace, with homes elevated above street level in a similar manner, including large front windows typical for many houses in the locality. A low profile “blue roof” will assist with rainwater management as part of the SUDs scheme and provide scope for a discreet solar PV array, each helping to minimise the environmental impacts of the development in use.

Proposed designs take cues from the surrounding built context whilst avoiding unnecessary pastiche or replication of existing characteristics. A common building set back, similar storey heights, and a terrace form, all reflect local patterns of development. Street level front doors and large windows overlook the public domain in a similar manner to other homes in the neighbourhood. And the “plinth” condition is used to accommodate car parking discretely and create a more welcoming street-scene. Planting beds to the front elevation will form part of the SUDs solution for the scheme.

Proposed materials are envisaged as a lighter brick at plinth level, with darker brick to match the local pennant stone for the upper storeys. This contrast differentiates living accommodation from the entrance level, and visually lifts the houses whilst providing a brighter surface nearest the street - reflecting painted rendered properties in the locality. Rearmost parking spaces will be screened, both for security and to reduce the visual impact of cars in the street scene. The arrangement of deep overhanging “porches” and partially covered forecourts will ensure a less conspicuous foremost parking space, and a more human scaled street scene with fewer visible cars. Horizontal detail bands at the upper levels will accentuate the terrace form and visually anchor the building to the ground plane, whilst also reducing the perceived height and massing of the proposal.

Concealed external rear stairs permit maintenance of elevated rear gardens from the under-croft areas, without cause to pass through homes. Open plan living arrangements at first floor level permit generous views through large windows over the street to the front, and full access to private gardens at the rear. Properties are anticipated as being highly energy efficient and designed to accommodate renewable technologies for minimal environmental impact. A large area of the upper part of the site will be retained for ecology retention, mitigation, and enhancement.

The submitted design is a reinterpretation of the terrace typology, strongly influenced by local characteristics and site conditions. It represents an appropriate response to existing local character (following contextual analysis of the area) balanced with current legislative requirements. The addition of new housing as proposed, will therefore add to the established mix of properties whilst building on older patterns of development and neighbourhood characteristics.



FIGURE 11 - DESIGN ITERATIONS



FIGURE 12 - DESIGN ITERATIONS



FIGURE 13 – DESIGN ITERATIONS

Proposed designs



Proposed designs



Proposed designs



Proposed designs



Proposed designs



Proposed designs



Proposed Materials

Subject to reserved matters application

Conclusions

The proposed development adopts a design approach that positively responds to local character (TAN 12) by reflecting architectural forms, massing, and key aspects of existing properties immediately adjacent to and in the vicinity of the application site. Variety in the street scene is achieved therefore, and in a manner which reflects patterns of development evident throughout the neighbourhood and accepted aspects of good placemaking. Analysis shows that the area typically includes a range of house types, sizes, and styles; and the addition of these newer properties will help diversify the residential mix further.

Flexible plan layouts, secure private gardens, energy efficient building fabric, and a location in an established settlement all contribute to the proposals credentials as sustainable housing suitable for today's needs and those of future generations.

A contemporary approach to the proposed designs reflects current and anticipated future lifestyles, without resorting to a pastiche copying of existing styles in the locality. The modern aesthetic coupled with traditional materials will add variety and interest to the street scene; and does not cause any adverse effects on the character of the neighbourhood sufficient to justify a refusal. A proposal of this nature, in an identified growth area, is compliant with both national and local planning policies and demonstrative of sensitive infill development which actively sustains key local characteristics whilst proposing a new housing type for the area.

Supporting Information

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